

Forest Plan Revision for the Colville, Okanogan, and Wenatchee National Forests May 5, 2006

Briefing: Wildland-Urban Interface Mapped for Revised Forest Plan

The Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) is the zone of land that is immediately adjacent to developments both within and outside of National Forest lands. The Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA), passed by Congress in December, 2003, highlighted the importance of the WUI as a zone where increased risks to life, property, and infrastructure from wildfire are present. National Forest vegetation management within this zone is aimed at protecting communities, watersheds, and at-risk lands from catastrophic wildfire, to enhance efforts to protect watersheds and address threats to forest and rangeland health.

Wildland-Urban Interface

The line, area, or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels.

The Forest Plan Revision has mapped the WUI zone by identifying key developments, then applying a buffer of 1.5 miles to the developments. The HFRA suggests this as an appropriate width in mountainous terrain. This WUI delineation used in plan revision is for analysis purposes, not for the day-to-day management of the Forest. The Forest maintains a different WUI map for the day-to-day management of the Forest. The Forest map is updated as changes occur, such as the completion of a Community Wildfire Protection Plan identifying a specific WUI for that community.

The Forest Plan Revision WUI map was frozen for analysis reasons on 12/13/2004. This map represents the best available data at the time. Because of the nature of Forest Plan analysis, data must be frozen at a point in time before analysis can begin. If the data is allowed to remain dynamic during the course of forest plan revision, then all analysis associated with that data would have to be redone with every change. The Forest Plan Revision WUI map provides sufficient information to help develop the strategic framework of the forest plan. Due to timeline and budgetary constraints associated with forest plan revision, continually redoing analysis is not cost effective nor will it move the forest plan revision towards completion.

The National Fire Plan was developed in August 2000, following a landmark wildland fire season, with the intent of actively responding to severe wildland fires and their impacts to communities while ensuring sufficient firefighting capacity for the future. The NFP addresses five key points: Firefighting, Rehabilitation, Hazardous Fuels Reduction, Community Assistance, and Accountability.

For further information on WUIs visit the National Fire Plan website at
<http://www.fireplan.gov/index.html>